

Course Rep Forum Notes: Assessment and Feedback

Thursday 6 December 2018 (Cotswold A) 13:15-14:15

Attendance

Chair: Sophie Williams (SW, Chief Executive of the Students' Union)

Panel: Marie Stowell (Director of Quality and Educational Development) and Sarah Greer (Deputy Vice Chancellor)

Also present: 38 Course Reps, Harrison Jarrett (Vice President Student Activities) and Jodie Stilgoe (JS, Student Voice Assistant, minute-taker)

Minutes

1.	<p>Introductions</p> <p>SW welcomed everyone to the second Course Rep Forum of the academic year. She explained that Euan Morrison, VP Education, who normally Chairs Course Rep Forums sends his apologies due to having to travel home. She explained that this Forum would focus on assessment and feedback. SW then introduced the Forum's panel.</p>
2.	<p>Update from Vice President Education</p> <p>2.1. Training</p> <p>The Students' Union has run most of its Course Rep training sessions. This included first time training and returning rep training. SW emphasised that it is mandatory for all Course Reps to complete training as part of their role. If Reps have not yet completed training, they were asked to visit the SU website for a list of current training dates or to complete the online training available. SW also explained that Euan and other SU staff travelled down to Devon and Cornwall to deliver training to Course Reps who study at our partner colleges.</p> <p>2.2. Education Council</p> <p>Education Council members consist of School Reps and Chairs of Academic Societies. Education Council meets to take a lead on what the Students' Union's position is on academic matters as well as conducting project-work alongside the VP Education.</p> <p>In the 2018-19 academic year, Education Council has established three working sub-groups:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Change Week and Conference Planning Group Members of this group organise and facilitate Change Week. Taking place on the week commencing 4 February, Change Week will be a week of activities with Reps, the SU and the University encouraging students to feed back about a variety of different topics including academic experiences, the SU, facilities, etc. 2. Learning Spaces Group

	<p>With the ambition to improve learning spaces that the University offers, members of this sub-group will be going out and asking students about what learning spaces they would like to see on Campus. They will take on board all student feedback and will feed suggestions into a report to take to the University. As part of this working group, members will also be looking into raising the awareness of current learning spaces.</p> <p>3. Rep and System Awareness Group This Group is looking into raising awareness among staff and students of our Course and School Reps as well as the Rep system in general. The Group will be looking at how they can better promote the work they are going and demonstrating impacts of the Rep system with students.</p> <p>The SU are also working into developing the Rep system further to cater for partner students and students with non-traditional delivery methods.</p> <p>2.3. National Higher Education Issues NUS's key priority areas for the 2018-19 academic year include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Campaigning on the black attainment gap and how, as a country, we can close it • Responding to the work of the new Higher Education regulator and taking part in upcoming reviews, for example the Augar fees and funding review • Brexit and its potential impacts on the Higher Education sector <p>Course Reps were encouraged to contact Euan if they would like to get involved in any of the above Higher Education campaigns.</p> <p>The University is taking part in a pilot of subject-level TEF this year. TEF (standing for Teaching Excellence and Student Outcomes Framework) provides information about the quality of teaching at Higher Education organisations to help prospective students choose where to study. Subject-level TEF has been piloted in many different universities but it will not officially launch until 2021. Because we are registered with the Office for Students (Higher Education regulator), Worcester is taking part in the pilot this year but these ratings will not be published externally. Course Reps (depending on the course) might be asked to get involved in the process, which is a great opportunity.</p>
3.	Assessment and Feedback
	<p>3.1. Overview</p> <p>Course Reps were all sent an electronic copy of a paper 'Review of Reassessment Regulations and Processes' which MS explained that she will discuss at the Learning, Teaching and Student Experience Committee on 12 December. The Reps' feedback from today's Forum will feed into this review.</p> <p>Formative Assessment</p>

Planning an early (within the first 4 weeks of teaching) formative assessment gives students confidence and enables them to identify effective learning of key skills (e.g. referencing and using the electronic submission form: Turnitin) It is a recommendation for all courses to set an early formative assessment and engage students in understanding assessment criteria.

Late Submissions

The current TCRF regulations permit a student to give in an assignment up to 5 days late and have it marked at a PASS. Students who submit work after 5 days but within 14 days of the deadline do not have work marked unless they have a valid claim of mitigating circumstances. The number of assessments submitted after 5 days and within 14 days is small.

It is a recommendation that students who submit work up to 7 days late will have it marked but capped at a bare pass (D-). It is also a recommendation for the 14-day period of late submission to be discontinued.

Timings of reassessment

If a student fails a module, students have the opportunity to be reassessed in failed assessments. Currently, all reassessments are completed in the reassessment period at the end of the academic year. MS noted that there are exceptions to this e.g. some professional courses. It is recommended for Level 4 modules to pilot an early reassessment opportunity scheme in 2019-20. This would make reassessment tasks available to students in advance of the reassessment period, so students can complete assessments 'early'.

Reassessment requirements

Currently, University regulation states that reassessment in a module will mean resitting the assessment item/s that have been failed and will normally involve the completion of new tasks. MS noted that this is not standard practice across the HE sector. A number of HE institutions allow students to rework the original assessment in the light of feedback. It is recommended that, where appropriate, the University should make the reassessment task for a failed item of assessment at Level 4, a re-working of the assignment in the light of feedback provided.

Limiting the amount of reassessment at the end of the year

MS explained that research shows that the more reassessments a student has, the more likely they are to not submit, or fail. It is recommended that consideration should be given for the action to be taken regarding a student who has failed 60 credits or more at the end of semester 1 (and/or at the end of semester 2) in terms of withdrawal/continuation on the course with no reassessment opportunity.

Course Reps then split into groups to discuss their cohort's opinions around the following questions:

1. The use of early formative assessment
2. Opportunities for an early re-assessment if students fail or do not submit an assessment in semester 1
3. Making the re-assessment task a 're-working' of the original assessment rather than a completion of a new assignment

4. Placing limits on the amount of re-assessment a student can be permitted to do

3.2. Student Feedback

The use of early formative assessment

- Students fed back that early formative assessments would make them nervous, as it means they have additional assessments to complete, which adds pressure.
- Other students fed back that formative assessments would be beneficial as they would be able to access feedback prior to submitting an assessment that will contribute to their overall grade.
- Formative assessments should be given with plenty of time for students to complete the assessment; some modules gave students just a few days to complete which added stress.
- Formative assessments are an excellent way for students to know if they are on the right track.
- Formative assessments would enable students be able to start preparing for their assessments at an earlier date.
- Students who already use this find it an excellent way of knowing if they are on track.
- It helps first years to improve their confidence in academic writing if they have never had that experience before.
- It provides students with time to practice using references and Turnitin.
- It was not deemed applicable for Level 5 and 6 students.
- The timings around formative assessments should be thought about; it should not be set too early as students are still settling into university life, but it should not be set near other assessments, as this is too much pressure for students.

Opportunities of early reassessment

- There was a consensus that it would be more useful for the reassessment process to take place within a shorter timeframe whilst the research/reading for the assessment is still fresh
- Early reassessments would not conflict with other modules that students have to take in semester 2
- There was confusion around how early reassessments would benefit students who undertake group work and placements

Making the reassessment task a 're-working' of the original assessment

- Students fed back that there should be a choice. Some students may feel less pressure to re-work their assessment using feedback received but some students may want to start over and complete a new assessment
- Students were concerned that some students may be at an unfair advantage and this may lead to an increase in mitigating circumstances claims
- Students raised concerns around self-plagiarism
- Re-working assessments would be beneficial as it would enable students to understand what they are doing wrong and what they are doing right

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> This should not be limited to just Level 4 students; Level 5 and 6 should have the opportunity to re-work their assessments too <p>Placing limits on the amount of reassessments a student can be permitted to do</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Depending on the module, assessments are weighted differently e.g., some assessments may only count for 15 credits whereas some are 45 credits. Therefore, it does not seem fair that the student who fails two 45-credit modules would have to re-start the year but the student who fails two 15-credit modules would not have to do this. It seems slightly unfair to place limits on resubmissions. Some students may just struggle with one or two assignments and may excel in the others. 60 credits seems like a lot to fail and therefore seems fair so some students were in support of this recommendation. Joint Honour students were confused about where that would leave them. For example, if a student is a taking JH History and Geography and were excelling in Geography modules but failing History modules, would that mean they would have to re-start the year? Failing 60 credits indicates that students will struggle in Level 5 and 6 and so they should not be continuing <p>Other Feedback</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Timings of assessments are often too close together which makes it difficult for students to prioritise workload and adds pressure. Some modules do not give students all information required to write the assessment until the last lecture of the semester, which is too close to the assessment date Consideration should be given to spacing out assessment deadlines to avoid clashes and to give students time to do well on each individual assessment. <p>MS thanked Course Reps for their feedback and explained that she would raise these points at the LTSEC meeting on 12 December.</p>
<p>6.</p>	<p>Any other business</p> <p>SW reminded Reps about the V- Record. Students who achieve a 50-hour award or higher will have it recorded on their degree transcript. SW also reminded Reps about the WSU Course Reps 2018-19 Facebook Group.</p> <p>During 4-8th February, the SU will be hosting our inaugural Change Week. As part of this Week, the SU will be holding its annual Course Rep Conference on Monday 4 February. This will be an all-day event with various developmental and skills-based sessions, a free networking lunch, and a high-level panel debate with Amatey Doku (NUS's Higher Education Vice President), Ross Renton (Pro Vice Chancellor Students) and Sarah Greer (Deputy Vice Chancellor).</p> <p>SW also noted that the Leadership Elections are coming up in March 2019 where students can stand to become the Union's next Vice President</p>

Education. More information about the Elections will be circulated with students in the new year.

SW thanked the Panel and the Course Reps for attending and contributing to the second Course Rep Forum of the academic year. The next Course Rep Forum will be taking place on Monday 25 March 2019 in Cotswold A 13:15-14:15.

The meeting adjourned at 14:15.